

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L FLORENCE 0336

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: ACHIEVEMENTS OF COMMUNIST LED LOCAL ADMINISTRATIONS

REF: ROME 5784

SUMMARY. STRICTLY SPEAKING, FLORENCE WAS THE ONLY PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF THE 15 PROVINCES IN THIS CONSULAR DISTRICT (TUSCANY AND ALL OF EMILIA-ROMAGNA EXCEPT PARMA AND PIACENZA) THAT CHANGED TO LEFTIST CONTROL AS A RESULT OF THE 1975 ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS. IN FLORENCE, THERE HAS BEEN NO DISCERNIBLE CHANGE IN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION AS COMPARED WITH THE PREVIOUS CENTER LEFT GOVERNMENT. PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF THIS NEW ADMINISTRATION INsofar AS DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS IS CONCERNED HAS NOT CHANGED IN ANY MEANINGFUL WAY EXCEPT FOR SOME EXPRESSION OF A LATENT FEAR OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN IN THE FUTURE IN FLORENCE IF THE PCI ENTERED THE NATIONAL GOVT. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIOR TO THE 1975 ELECTIONS, FLORENCE, LUCCA AND MASSA WERE THE ONLY PROVINCIAL CAPITAL CITIES NOT CONTROLLED BY THE COMMUNISTS OR THE COMMUNISTS COMBINED WITH THE SOCIALISTS. FOLLOWING THESE
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ELECTIONS, LUCCA REMAINED IN CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC HANDS; FLORENCE WENT FROM CENTER LEFT TO COMMUNIST/SOCIALIST CONTROL; AND MASSA CAME UNDER CONTROL OF A PCI/PSI/MUIS COALITION WHEN THE PSDI MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL RENOUNCED THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE PSDI AND RENAMED THEMSELVES MOVIMENTO UNITARIO DI INIZIATIVA SOCIALISTA (JUIS). THE OTHER 12 PROVINCES IN TUSCANY AND EMILIA-ROMAGNA REMAINED UNDER COMMUNIST/

SOCIALIST CONTROL. THUS, THE ONLY CITY IN THIS CONSULAR DISTRICT MEETING THE CRITERIA OF REFTEL IS FLORENCE. FOR THE RECORD, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT THE CENTER LEFT GOVERNMENT IN FLORENCE FELL IN OCTOBER 1974 AND FLORENCE WAS GOVERNED BY A QUOTE COMMISSARIO UNQUOTE APPOINTED BY THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT FROM OCTOBER 30, 1974 UNTIL JULY 1975. IN OUR VIEW, THIS NINE MONTH INTERREGNUM DOES NOT PREVENT A VALID COMPARISON OF THE CENTER LEFT AND LEFTIST REGIMES.

2. PARTICULARLY SINCE RECEIPT REFTEL, WE HAVE TALKED TO INDIVIDUALS IN ALL WALKS OF LIFE IN THIS CITY TO OBTAIN THEIR OPINIONS AS TO WHAT, IF ANYTHING, HAS CHANGED CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF THIS CITY SINCE THE ADVENT OF THE COMMUNIST/SOCIALIST REGIME IN JULY 1975. INCLUDED AMONG THOSE WITH WHOM WE HAVE TALKED ARE THE COMMUNIST MAYOR OF FLORENCE, SEVERAL CITY GOVERNMENT MEMBERS OF VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES, CITY EMPLOYEES, BUSINESSMEN, POLITICAL LEADERS, JOURNALISTS AND JUST PLAIN PRIVATE CITIZENS. IT IS THE CLEAR CONSENSUS THAT NO DISCERNIBLE CHANGE FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE HAS TAKEN PLACE IN THESE APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS. FOR EXAMPLE, MINOR CHANGES SUCH AS THE REOPENING OF SOME BRANCH LIBRARIES CLOSED BY THE PREVIOUS CENTER LEFT GOVERNMENT FOR ECONOMY REASONS, HAVE BEEN CANCELLED OUT BY DIFFICULTIES IN OBTAINING GARBAGE BAGS.

3. FOLLOWING THIS CONCLUSION, WE HAVE ENDEAVORED TO ASCERTAIN WHY THERE HAS BEEN NO CHANGE. THE PRINCIPAL EXPLANATION WE GET FROM THOSE WHO ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE IN THIS FIELD IS THAT NO CITY GOVERNMENT REALLY

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HAS THE FINANCIAL ABILITY TO EFFECT ANY CHANGE IN THE DAILY PROVISION OF GOODS AND SERVICES THAT AFFECT THE CITIZENRY. THE REASON IS THAT SINCE 1973 NO CITY HAS HAD THE POWER TO LEVY ANY SIGNIFICANT TAXES AND ALL FUNDS REQUIRED FOR CITY ADMINISTRATION MUST COME FROM THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, IN FLORENCE PRACTICALLY THE ONLY FEES OR TAXES COLLECTED DIRECTLY BY THE CITY ARE THE DOG TAX, PAYMENTS FOR WATER, GARBAGE REMOVAL, AND TRAFFIC FINES.

4. SINCE FLORENCE UNDER THE PRESENT REGIME, AS WELL AS UNDER THE PREVIOUS CENTER LEFT REGIME, HAS SUBMITTED A DEFICIT BUDGET TO ROME, THE RESULT HAS BEEN THAT MANY NECESSARY SERVICES HAVE HAD TO BE PROVIDED THROUGH BORROWING FROM COMMERCIAL BANKS OR OTHER SOURCES. ACCORDINGLY, ANY APPRECIABLE INCREASE IN SERVICES CAN BE OBTAINED ONLY THROUGH AN INCREASE IN THE CITY DEBT. EVEN THOUGH CITY GOVERNMENTS DO HAVE THE ABILITY TO MOVE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT PROVIDED FUNDS FROM ON

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ITEM TO ANOTHER WITHIN THE APPROVED BUDGET, THE FLEXIBILITY HERE RESULTS ONLY IN ROBBING PETER TO PAY PAUL. (BELIEVE IT IS NOTEWORTHY TO MENTION HERE IN THIS REGARD THAT THE HIGHLY TOUTED COMMUNIST/ SPONSORED FREE BUS SERVICE IN BOLOGNA HAS HAD TO BE DRASTICALLY REVISED RECENTLY. THE NUMBER OF HOURS OF FREE BUS SERVICE HAS GREATLY BEEN REDUCED, THE COST OF A BUS RIDE DURING NON-FREE HOURS HAS BEEN DOUBLED FROM 50 LIRE TO 100 LIRE, AND THE CITY COUNCIL IS NOW DEBATING WHETHER TO INCREASE THE PRICE OF A BUS RIDE BETWEEN 8:00 PM TO 5:00 AM TO 200 LIRE.)

5. WE CAN FIND NO EVIDENCE THAT THE AVERAGE CITIZEN BELIEVES THE PRESENT COMMUNIST/SOCIALIST RULERS OF FLORENCE ARE ANY MORE HONEST THAN THEIR CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC/SOCIALIST/SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PREDECESSORS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE COMMUNIST CONTROLLED CITY GOVERNMENT MADE A GREAT SPLASH DURING ITS INITIAL MONTHS BY ENFORCING THE RULES CONCERNING WORKING HOURS OF CITY EMPLOYEES. MANY AVERAGE CITIZENS

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TELL US NOW THAT ABSENTEEISM, TARDINESS, AND EARLY DEPARTURES FROM WORK ARE ABOUT AS BAD AS THEY WERE BEFORE. LIKEWISE, MANY FLORENTINES TELL US THAT THERE IS WIDESPREAD SUSPICION THAT THE COMMUNISTS PUSHED FOR THE ELECTION OF FORWARD COUNCILS SO THAT THESE LOCALLY ELECTED BODIES COULD PROVIDE ADDITIONAL EYES AND EARS FOR SPYING ON AND CONTROL OF THE LOCAL CITIZENRY. IN SUM, THE LINES AND WAITING PERIODS AT CITY OFFICES ARE JUST AS LONG AS THEY WERE BEFORE, THE TAPE HAS NOT BEEN REDUCED, AND HINTS OF SCANDAL ARE ABOUT AS THEY WERE BEFORE.

6. THE FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL IS COMPOSED OF 60 MEMBERS AS FOLLOWS: PCI 26; PSI 6, PDUP 1, PSDI 3, PRI 2, DC 18, PLI 1, MSI 3. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE FORMED A MAJORITY GOVERNMENT BY INCLUDING ONLY THE SOCIALISTS AND THEY HAVE ESSENTIALLY IGNORED THE OTHER PARTIES. NO MEMBERS OF ANY PARTY EXCEPT THE PCI OR PSI HOLD ANY ASSESSORI (ALDERMEN) POSITIONS. DESPITE THIS WORKING RELATIONSHIP, HOWEVER, ACTUAL PERSONAL AND POLITICAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE COMMUNISTS AND SOCIALISTS IN THE FLORENCE CITY GOVERNMENT ARE OFTEN VERY TENSE; THERE

ARE ALSO PRISONERS OF THE FACT THAT THEY ARE PRISONERS OF THE COMMUNISTS BECAUSE THE COMMUNISTS ARE AS BAD AS THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WERE IN MAKING ANY CONCESSIONS TO SOCIALIST OBJECTIVES OR PROGRAMS. GORDON

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